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Abraham Lincoln The

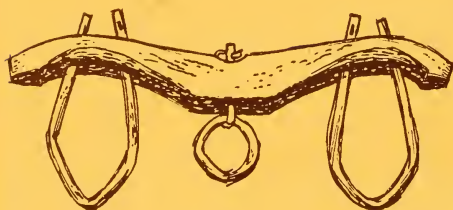
Great Emancipator

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LINCOLN ROOM



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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

★ *The Great Emancipator*



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ABRAHAM LINCOLN

The Great Emancipator

Presented by

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The statue of Lincoln by Daniel Chester French, in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. Above are engraved these words: "In this temple, as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the Union, the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever."

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Lincoln Room

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BORN in a log cabin, he ascended to the White House; attending school less than one year, he became a great orator and writer; beset with disappointments and defeats, he rose above them and became one of the most revered and beloved of statesmen in all history. So reads the remarkable career of Abraham Lincoln.

He was born on February 12, 1809, in a rough log cabin on a small farm in the backwoods of Kentucky, in what is now Larue County. The United States Government has recently enclosed this sacred hut in a great stone memorial, thus seeking to preserve the birthplace of one of our greatest Americans.

Lincoln's father, Thomas Lincoln, who could neither read nor write, was not energetic nor ambitious and provided only the barest kind of a living for his family; Lincoln's mother, Nancy Hanks Lincoln, was gentle and religious and too frail for the hardships of rude pioneer life.

In 1816, after having lived in several places, the family moved to Indiana, working their way through nearly one hundred miles of forest. During the first winter, they lived in a three-sided shed, with a buffalo-skin to close it. A year later, a log cabin was completed, but it had only the earth as a floor. The next year Mrs. Lincoln died. When a grown man, Abraham wrote of her: "All that I am and all that I hope to be I owe to my sainted mother."

Education

LINCOLN went to school "by littles," as he said, for about nine years; but all his schooling together did not amount to one full year. He taught himself to read, cipher, and write. He had no pencils or paper, but wrote his lessons and did his sums on a wooden shovel with a piece of charcoal. Later, when he did secure paper, he copied his compositions with a pen made from a wild turkey's quill and ink from blackberry root.

Although he had to work very hard helping his father clear the forest, plough ground, plant corn, gather and shuck it, or doing odd jobs for neighboring farmers, he read every book he could lay his hands on. He often walked miles to borrow a book, and once told a friend that he had "read through every book that he had heard of within a circuit of fifty miles."

Lincoln was endowed with a great deal of native wit, a ready tongue, and the ability to tell stories. Because of these gifts, he was always a popular figure at house-raising and husking-bees, where he entertained the country-folk with his speeches and funny stories. His

natural gift for speech-making, coupled with a great love of justice, made him consider law as a profession. But, because he had no law books of his own and no money with which to buy any, he often walked twelve miles to the office of an acquaintance to read a volume on the laws of Indiana.

At nineteen, Lincoln stood six feet four inches in his bare feet. His arms and legs were unusually long, and his hands and feet huge. His strength was equal to that of three men; he could lift and carry a pair of logs and could outrun and outwrestle any man or boy in the countryside.

Down the Mississippi

IN 1828, when he was nineteen, Lincoln was given charge of a neighbor's flatboat and sent on an eighteen-hundred-mile journey down the Mississippi River to New Orleans to market vegetables and bacon among the cotton planters.

Two years later, the Lincoln family, in wagons drawn by heavy oxteams, moved to Illinois and built another log cabin. Abraham split wooden rails to fence in ten acres of land, and hence, years later, when a candidate for the presidency of the United States, he was nicknamed the "rail-splitter." The same winter, he split fourteen hundred rails to pay a woman for a pair of trousers which she made for him. The next spring he made a second trip to New Orleans on a flatboat, and saw for the first time negroes chained and put on a block and sold to the highest bidder. It is said that the sight made him sick at heart and that he then and there

pledged himself to fight slavery if ever the opportunity came. Little did he dream then that his name was to go down in history as the great liberator of these oppressed people.

War, Politics, and Business

ON his return, Lincoln settled in New Salem, Illinois, where he lived for several years and did odd jobs about town. Later he clerked in Denton Offutt's store, finding time to study *Kirkham's Grammar*, "lying full length on the counter with his head on a parcel of calico," and to spin his famous yarns to the men and boys who gathered at the village store. Here he won the lasting nickname of "Honest Abe." He is said to have walked two miles to correct a mistake in change of six cents. But within a year the store "petered out," and Lincoln, now twenty-two, was without a job.

At the time of the Black Hawk war, volunteers from New Salem chose Lincoln as their captain, but the war was over before they saw active service.

Ambitious to enter politics, in the spring of 1832 Lincoln announced that he would be a candidate in the autumn election for the State legislature. Although he secured very nearly all of the votes of his immediate neighborhood, he was not elected.

With a Mr. Berry as partner, Lincoln now bought three small stores in New Salem and combined them into one. The purchasing was done on credit, and early in 1833 the business "winked out," as Lincoln said, and left the firm owing \$1,200. Berry died soon after, and

Lincoln assumed the entire debt. He might have freed himself by declaring bankruptcy, but he chose rather to pay every dollar of this debt, although it took about fifteen years of struggling and saving to do so.

Lincoln soon obtained the position of assistant surveyor to John Calhoun, then surveyor of the county. Meanwhile he was appointed local postmaster; and because the mails were small and infrequent, he "carried the office around in his hat."

In the Illinois State Legislature

"CAN'T the party raise any better material than that?" asked a bystander, as he looked at Lincoln, who was about to make a speech in his second campaign for State legislator in 1834. After Lincoln's speech the bystander exclaimed that he knew more than all the other candidates put together. This time Lincoln was elected, and thereafter he was elected for three further terms.

Lincoln went to Vandalia, then the State capital, in a brand-new suit of "store clothes" bought with money loaned by a friend. Here he met Stephen A. Douglas, who for years was to be his rival in more than one affair. In 1836, at the age of twenty-seven, Lincoln was admitted to the bar, and went to live in Springfield, the new State capital. On a borrowed horse, and with little money, he rode up to the store of an acquaintance, Mr. Speed, and asked if he could buy bedding and have credit until Christmas, when he hoped to be a success at law. "If I fail in this," he said, "I do not know that I can ever pay

you." Speed offered to share his own large bed with him in his room over the store. Lincoln carried his saddle bags up to the room, dropped them on the floor, and came back beaming with delight. "Well, Speed, I've moved!" he said.

In the Illinois legislature, Lincoln's power and wisdom as a statesman first began to develop. He lived close to the people, and believed in their judgment as the surest guide to right in public affairs. He worked hard to give the State, railroads, canals, and banks.

During these eight years, Lincoln was also practicing law, and he became widely known and admired as he rode about the country with the district judge from one court house to another. In 1843, he entered a law partnership with William Herndon. Lincoln made it a point to defend only such cases as he believed to be absolutely right and just. Once he gave up a case in the middle of a testimony when he found that he was on the wrong side. He had the habit of telling stories that not only spread good humor in the courtroom, but that made his case clear. He soon became one of the best lawyers in Illinois.

When a young man, Lincoln had won the love of Ann Rutledge. At her death, his grief was so great his friends feared that he would lose his mind. Years later, in 1842, Lincoln and Douglas were rivals for the heart and hand of Mary Todd, a handsome young woman from Kentucky. Lincoln was the victor, and they were married on November 4, 1842. Four boys were born to them, one of whom, Robert T. Lincoln, later became United States Ambassador to Great Britain.

Lincoln and Slavery

WHEN Lincoln took his seat in the United States House of Representatives to serve a two-year term, the question of slavery was overshadowing both national and state politics.

Here he declared: "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong." Lincoln fought for a plan to keep slavery out of the territory from Texas to Oregon. He declared that he voted for this plan "at least forty times," but to no avail. He also tried to get a law passed to free slaves in the District of Columbia, but failed.

He was not reelected to Congress and so returned to his law practice. He was greatly in need of money. Besides supporting his own family, he sent money to his father, his stepmother, and a step-brother, and after his father's death, he paid off a mortgage on the old home. He "rode the circuit," a "gray shawl about his shoulders, carrying a carpet bag, fat with papers and clothing, and a faded green cotton umbrella without a handle, tied with a piece of twine."

In 1854 the Kansas-Nebraska Bill became a law. It was introduced into the Senate by Douglas, and permitted the two new territories of Kansas and Nebraska to decide for themselves, when admitted to the Union, whether they would be free or slave States. The North realized that this new law opened to slavery the great territory of the northwest.

The Republican Party was born at this time, with Abraham Lincoln as one of the founders. At the first Republican National Convention held in Philadelphia,

1856, Lincoln was conspicuously mentioned as candidate for Vice-President, but was not nominated.

Senator Stephen A. Douglas came back to Illinois and boldly defended his Kansas-Nebraska bill; whereupon Lincoln made answer in a three-hour speech which made him the champion in the great cause of human liberty. In 1858 the Democrats of Illinois nominated Douglas as Senator; and the Republicans declared that: "The Honorable Abraham Lincoln is our first and only choice for United States Senator." Cheering throngs packed the floor and galleries of the State House at Springfield to hear Lincoln's speech of acceptance. His words have come down to us, ringing with truth and justice: "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free."

Lincoln now challenged Douglas to meet him in a series of debates. Seven debates were held. People came from all over the country to the towns in Illinois where the debates took place. Douglas's arguments were fluent and brilliant; Lincoln's were straightforward and simple, reaching the very hearts of the people. Indeed, as Lincoln lost himself in his subject, his voice rang with a deep, strange beauty, his sad eyes kindled, and his tall, gaunt figure acquired a certain majesty.

Douglas argued that people had the right to choose for themselves whether or not they would have slaves. Lincoln argued that no man had the right to be master of another; that slavery was wrong and that it must be abolished. Although Douglas won the election as Senator, Lincoln was soon to have a greater honor,—that of becoming President of the United States.

President of the United States

AFTER the debates with Douglas, Lincoln's reputation as a great orator spread throughout the country and he was invited to address audiences in every part of the United States. *The New York Tribune* said of his speech at Cooper Institute in New York, February, 1860, "No man ever made such an impression in his first appeal to a New York audience." This famous speech was printed and quoted everywhere, and it aided in securing his election as President.

As the presidential election of 1860 drew near, intense bitterness spread between the North and the South. On November 6, 1860, Lincoln was elected the sixteenth President of the United States. Before the next February, seven Southern States had left the Union, formed the Confederate States of America, and elected Jefferson Davis as their President.

In Lincoln's inaugural address, delivered March 4, 1861, he said: "The Union of these States (United States) is perpetual. No State upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union." Later he said: "The country has placed me at the helm of the ship; I'll try to steer her through." Many were those who shook their heads and asked: "Will that awkward old backwoodsman really get that ship through?"

Considerate, gentle, tender, firm as a rock when he made up his mind, yet with a power to inspire and hold his followers, through years of suffering and failure, steady to their purpose, Abraham Lincoln finally proved himself the most popular and beloved statesman in America. He loved the common people, and they trusted him. Often his Cabinet suggested that he write

his state papers in more elegant form, but he continued to write them in his own simple language, saying, "The people will understand."

Beginning of the Civil War

VIRGINIA, Arkansas, Tennessee, and North Carolina joined the Southern Federation. On April 12, 1861, the Confederacy began the Civil War by firing upon the Union flag flying over Fort Sumter, South Carolina.

Lincoln, who from the very first declared the war to be for the Union, not against slavery, issued a call for 75,000 volunteers and made George B. McClellan chief commander of the Northern army. In July the battle of Bull Run, the first real fight of the war, was a victory for the South. The North was stunned by this blow. For months and months General McClellan organized and drilled an excellent army, but made no move against the South. It remained for General U. S. Grant to win the first Northern victories. Early in the winter of 1862 he captured Ft. Henry and Ft. Donelson. Lincoln finally dismissed McClellan and made Grant commander of the Northern forces.

But the North was to meet defeat after defeat, and Lincoln, whose small son, Willie, died at this time, grew more and more tender toward the suffering. He often visited the camps, hospitals, and prisons, talked with officers and men and won their confidence and love. It is said that throughout the war a Bible lay on his desk, that he read it often, and many times spent all night in prayer.

Freedom for Slaves

ALTHOUGH Lincoln put the saving of the Union as the first great purpose of the war, by 1862 he knew that the abolishing of slavery should be made the second great purpose. Thousands of slaves were escaping to the North, and, in July, 1862, the Congress passed a law permitting these escaped slaves to enter the Northern army, and allowing them and their families freedom. Lincoln first tried to have the slaves freed gradually and to have the Government pay their owners for their loss, but the South would not agree to this plan. Then, in his own quiet, sincere way, without even consulting his Cabinet, Lincoln framed the mighty sentences of the *Emancipation Proclamation*. But the time was not yet ripe for announcing this proclamation. The Northern army was defeated at Cedar Mountain and in the second battle of Bull Run, and was now facing Lee, who had crossed the Potomac into Maryland. Lincoln told his Cabinet that he had made a promise to himself and his Maker, that if God gave the victory in the approaching battle, he would consider that God had decided his questions in favor of the slaves. On September 17 the Northerners were victorious at Antietam. Five days later, Lincoln issued the preliminary *Emancipation Proclamation*, making four million slaves, "on the first of January, 1863,— thenceforth and forever free."

On New Year's Day, when Lincoln signed the final draft of the *Proclamation*, he said: "If my name ever gets into history, it will be for this act, and my whole soul is in it."

But the war was not yet over. The North suffered terrible defeats at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville,

but victory awaited them at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. Lincoln kept a large map of the United States on his wall and carefully followed the movements of the armies. Day and night he studied the campaign, pored over military books on strategy, planned movements with his generals, and often directed his leaders. But his heart ached for the men on the battlefields and for their anxious families at home. His face became thin and drawn, his eyes heavy and sunken, and he remarked: "I feel as though I shall never be glad again." Once when a Union general urged him to execute twenty soldiers for deserters he answered: "There are already too many weeping widows in the United States. For God's sake don't ask me to add to the number, for I won't do it."

The autumn of 1863 brought the Northern victory at Chattanooga. The next spring saw Grant beginning his attack on Richmond, with heavy losses at Wilderness, Spottsylvania, and Cold Harbor. Lincoln called upon the North for more men. By this time the people had learned to love and trust Lincoln, and they rallied round him, shouting: "We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand strong." Again they elected him President.

In the Congress of January, 1865, Lincoln's lifelong dream and hope became a great reality when an amendment was added to the *Constitution of the United States*, forever forbidding slavery in every part of the United States.

In his second inaugural address, delivered March 4, 1865, Lincoln said: "Fondly do we hope — fervently do we pray — that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away . . . With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives

us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan,— to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

But it was not until after Sherman had marched through Georgia, and the Northern army, on April 3, 1865, had entered Richmond, and Lee, on April 9, had surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Court House, that the war was over. When the news of Lee's surrender reached the White House, Lincoln met with his Cabinet, and at his word, silently and in tears, they knelt and gave humble thanks to God.

The wildest delight swept the land. The long and terrible war between the Blue and the Gray was over! The Union was saved! The slaves were free! Abraham Lincoln was hailed as the great friend of the people, the liberator of an oppressed race. Lincoln went to Richmond, the recent capital of the Southern Confederacy. He passed a group of negroes digging at a river landing. One of them, an old man, saw Lincoln, leaped forward, and cried, exulting: "Bress de Lord, dere is the great Messiah! He's cum at las' to free his chillum from dere bondage! Glory Hallelujah!" The old negro fell on his knees and kissed Lincoln's feet. Surrounded by kneeling negroes, Lincoln spoke: "Don't kneel to me. Kneel to God only, and thank Him for liberty."

Lincoln had no hatred for the South. He honored the valor of the Southern soldiers and generals. He called Stonewall Jackson a "brave, honest soldier," and once, when looking at Lee's picture, he said: "It is the face of a brave and noble man."

“Now He Belongs to the Ages”

GREAT of heart and mind, the kindly Lincoln has won the hearts of the people as few men in all the world's history have ever won them. He once remarked that “God must love the common people, he made so many of them.” It has been said that he never forsook a friend or lost an opportunity to do a kind deed, be it ever so humble a one. His last official act was one of mercy: he signed a pardon for a soldier who had been sentenced to be shot for desertion, and, as he did so, Lincoln remarked: “I think the boy can do us more good above ground than under ground.”

The evening of the very day when he signed this pardon, April 14, 1865, he went to the Ford Theatre with Mrs. Lincoln, to see the play, “Our American Cousin.” His box was draped with flags; the happy excitement of war ended, victory won, and peace promised, was everywhere. At twenty minutes after ten o'clock, when all eyes were on the stage, a pistol shot rang out. Lincoln fell forward in his chair, his assassin leaped to the stage, caught his spur in a flag, and fell, but succeeded in getting to the stage door and riding away on a horse. Mrs. Lincoln cried out: “He has murdered the President.” Lincoln was carried to a house opposite, where he lay silently through the night — while all Washington watched, praying for his life — but the next morning, without regaining consciousness, he died. Stanton, his great friend, whispered to those about the bedside: “Now he belongs to the ages.”

John Hancock
MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS



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